

#### IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Understanding what an operating system is and is not
- » Turning your Mac on and off
- » Getting to know the start-up process
- » Avoiding major Mac mistakes
- » Pointing, clicking, dragging, and other uses for your mouse
- » Getting help from your Mac

## Chapter **1**

# macOS Ventura 101 (Prerequisites: None)

**C**ongratulate yourself on choosing macOS version 13, generally known as Ventura. Now congratulate yourself again for making your Mac even easier to use, with hundreds of tweaks to help you do more work in less time, and even easier on the eye.

This chapter starts at the very beginning and talks about macOS in mostly abstract terms; then it moves on to explain what you need to know to use macOS Ventura successfully. A number of features described here haven't changed in years, so if you've been using macOS for a while, much of the information in this chapter may seem hauntingly familiar.

But if you decide to skip this chapter because you think you have all the new stuff figured out, you'll miss at least a couple of things that Apple didn't bother to tell you.

Tantalized? Let's rock.

# Okay, What Does macOS Do?

The operating system (that is, the OS part of *macOS*) is what makes your Mac a Mac. Without it, your Mac is nothing but a pile of silicon and circuits — no smarter than a toaster.

“So what does an operating system do?” you ask. Good question. The simple answer is that an OS controls the basic and most important functions of your computer. In the case of macOS and your Mac, the operating system

- » Manages memory
- » Controls how windows, icons, and menus work
- » Keeps track of files
- » Manages networking and security
- » Does housekeeping (but only its own — not yours)

Other forms of software, such as word processors and web browsers, rely on the OS to create and maintain the environment in which they work their magic. When you create a memo, for example, the word processor provides the tools for you to type and format the information and save it in a file. In the background, the OS is the muscle for the word processor, performing the following crucial functions:

- » Providing the mechanism for drawing and moving the onscreen window in which you write the memo
- » Keeping track of the file when you save it
- » Helping the word processor create drop-down menus and dialogs for you to interact with
- » Communicating with other programs
- » And much, much more (stuff that only geeks could care about)

So, armed with a little background in operating systems, take a gander at the next section before you do anything else with your Mac.

One last thing: macOS Ventura comes with nearly 60 applications in its Applications and Utilities folders. Although I’d love to tell you all about each and every one, I have only so many pages at my disposal.

## THE MAC ADVANTAGE

Someone wise once said, “Claiming that macOS is inferior to Windows because more people use Windows is like saying that all other restaurants serve food that’s inferior to McDonald’s.”

We might be a minority, but Mac users have the best, most stable, most modern all-purpose operating system in the world, and here’s why: Unix, on which macOS is based, is widely regarded as the best industrial-strength operating system on the planet. For now, just know that being based on Unix means that a Mac running macOS benefits from nearly four decades of continuous Unix development, which means less downtime. Being Unix-based also means getting far fewer viruses and encounters with malicious software. But perhaps the biggest advantage macOS has is that when an application crashes, it doesn’t crash your entire computer, and you usually don’t have to restart the computer to continue working.

## A Safety Net for the Absolute Beginner (or Any User)

The following sections deal with the stuff that macOS Help doesn’t cover — or doesn’t cover in nearly enough detail. If you’re a first-time Mac user, please, *please* read this section of the book carefully; it could save your life. Okay, okay, perhaps that’s overly dramatic — but reading this section could save your Mac, your sanity, or both. Even if you’re an experienced Mac user, you may want to read this section. Chances are you’ll see at least a few things you’ve forgotten that will come in handy now that you’ve been reminded of them.

### Turning the dang thing on

Okay. This is the big moment: turning on your Mac!

Apple, in its infinite wisdom, has manufactured Macs with power buttons on every conceivable surface: on the front, side, and back of the computer itself, and even on the keyboard and monitor.

So if you don’t know how to turn on your Mac, don’t feel bad; just look in the manual or booklet that came with your Mac. It’s at least one thing that the documentation *always* covers.



You don't have that little booklet? Most MacBook models have the power button in the upper-right corner of the keyboard, most iMac models have the button at the back of the screen, the Mac mini and the “trash can” Mac Pro have it at the back of the enclosure, and the big Mac Pro boxes have it on the front. The power button usually looks like the little circle thingy you see in the margin — but on some Mac models, the power button doubles as the Touch ID button for identifying you via your fingerprint and doesn't show the icon.



TIP

Launch the Books app, click the Search field at the top of the sidebar on the left, and type the name of your Mac plus the word *Essentials* — for example, “MacBook Air Essentials” or “iMac Essentials.” In the Suggestions section, click the right result, and grab the free Essentials ebook with your Mac's name, by Apple. At around 150 pages each, these booklets aren't in any way comprehensive, but they do include some vital information, including where to find the power button on your particular Mac.

## What you should see on start-up

When you finally do turn on your Mac, you set in motion a sophisticated and complex series of events that culminates in the loading of macOS and the appearance of the macOS desktop. After a small bit of whirring, buzzing, and flashing (meaning that the OS is loading), macOS first tests all the Mac's hardware — slots, ports, disks, random access memory (RAM), and so on. If everything passes, you'll see a tasteful whitish Apple logo in the middle of your screen, as shown in Figure 1-1.



FIGURE 1-1:

This is what you'll see if everything is fine and dandy when you turn on your Mac.

Here are the things that you might see when you power up your Mac:

- » **Login screen:** Depending on your settings, you might or might not see the macOS login screen. Here, you choose your user account, enter your password, and press Return (or click the little right-arrow-in-a-circle in the password field), and away you go.



TIP



WARNING



REMEMBER

If you don't want to type your password every time you start or restart your Mac (or even if you do), check out Chapter 20 for the scoop on how to turn the login screen on or off.

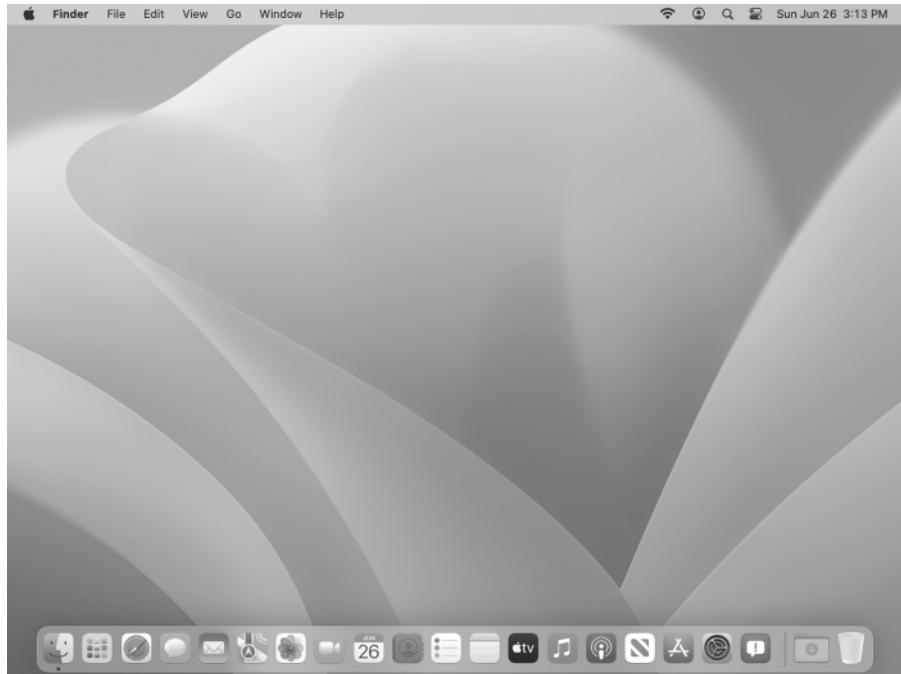
You should turn off the login screen only if you can guarantee you'll be the only one touching the machine. With the login screen disabled, your Mac and everything in it is completely available to anyone who turns it on, which is usually *not* a good thing. So I don't recommend turning off the login screen on a MacBook. And even desktop Mac users should think twice before turning it off.

Either way, the desktop soon materializes before your eyes. If you haven't customized, configured, or tinkered with your desktop, it should look pretty much like Figure 1-2. Now is a good time to take a moment for positive thoughts about the person who convinced you that you wanted a Mac. That person was right!

» **Blue/black/gray screen of death:** If any of your hardware fails when it's tested, you may see a blue, black, or gray screen.

The fact that something went wrong is no reflection on your prowess as a Mac user. Something is broken, and your Mac may need repairs. If this is happening to you right now, check out Chapter 23 to try to get your Mac well again.

**FIGURE 1-2:**  
The desktop after  
a brand-  
spanking-new  
installation of  
macOS Ventura.





TIP

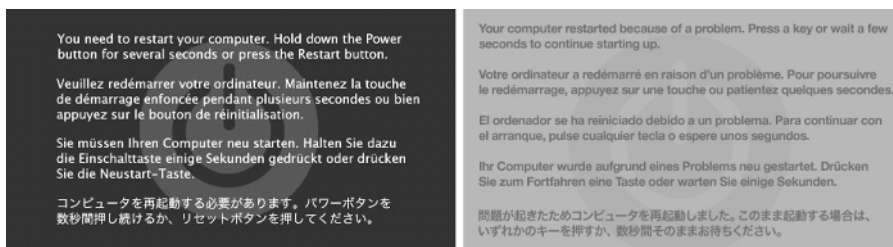


If your computer is under warranty, set up a Genius Bar appointment at your nearest Apple Store or dial 1-800-SOS-APPL, and a customer-service person can tell you what to do. Before you do anything, though, skip ahead to Chapter 23. It's entirely possible that one of the suggestions there will get you back on track without your having to spend even a moment on hold.

» **Prohibitory sign or flashing question mark in a folder:** Most users eventually encounter the prohibitory sign or flashing question mark in a folder (as shown in the margin). These icons mean that your Mac can't find a start-up disk, hard drive, USB thumb drive, or network server containing a valid Mac operating system. See Chapter 23 for ways to ease your Mac's ills.

» **Kernel panic:** You may occasionally see a block of text in several languages, including English, as shown in Figure 1-3. This means that your Mac has experienced a *kernel panic*, the most severe type of system crash. If you restart your Mac and see either message again, look in Chapter 23 for a myriad of possible cures for all kinds of ailments, including this one.

**FIGURE 1-3:**  
If you're seeing something like this, things are definitely not fine and dandy.



How do you know which version of macOS your computer has? Just click the  menu at the left end of the menu bar and then click About This Mac. A window pops up on your screen, as shown in Figure 1-4. The version you're running appears on the macOS line.



TECHNICAL  
STUFF

If you're curious or just want to impress your friends, you might want to know that version 12 was Monterey; version 11 was Big Sur; version 10.15 was Catalina; 10.14 was Mojave; 10.13 was High Sierra; 10.12 was Sierra; 10.11 was El Capitan; 10.10 was Yosemite; 10.9 was Mavericks; 10.8 was Mountain Lion; 10.7 was Lion; 10.6 was Snow Leopard; 10.5 was Leopard; 10.4 was Tiger; 10.3 was Panther; 10.2 was Jaguar; 10.1 was Puma; and 10.0 was Cheetah.

## Shutting down properly

Turning off the power without shutting down your Mac properly is one of the worst things you can do to your poor Mac. Shutting down your Mac improperly

can really screw up your hard or solid-state drive, scramble the contents of your most important files, or both.



**FIGURE 1-4:**  
See which version  
of macOS you're  
running.

## ETERNALLY YOURS . . . NOW

macOS is designed so that you never have to shut it down. You can configure it to sleep after a specified period of inactivity. (See Chapter 20 for more info on the Energy Saver and Battery System Settings panes.) If you do so, your Mac will consume very little electricity when it's sleeping and will usually be ready to use (when you press any key or click the mouse) in a few seconds. On the other hand, if you're not going to be using your Mac for a few days, you might want to shut it down anyway.

**Note:** If you leave your Mac on constantly, and you're gone when a lightning storm or rolling blackout hits, your Mac might get hit by a power surge or worse. So be sure you have adequate protection — say, a decent surge protector designed for computers — if you decide to leave your Mac on and unattended for long periods. See the section “A few things you should definitely not do with your Mac,” elsewhere in this chapter, for more info on lightning and your Mac.

One last thing: If you have a MacBook, and it will be enclosed in a bag or briefcase for more than a few hours, turn it off. Otherwise, it could overheat — even in Sleep mode.



#### WARNING

If a thunderstorm is rumbling nearby, or you're unfortunate enough to have rolling blackouts where you live, you may really want to shut down your Mac and unplug it from the wall. (See the next section, which briefly discusses lightning and your Mac.) If you have a MacBook, you can just disconnect it from its charging cable and continue using it if you like.

To turn off your Mac, always use the Shut Down command from the  (Apple) menu and then click the Shut Down button in the Are You Sure You Want to Shut Down Your Computer Now? dialog.



#### TIP

When the Shut Down button (or any button, for that matter) is highlighted, you can activate it by pressing the Return key rather than clicking it.

The Are You Sure You Want to Shut Down Your Computer Now? dialog sports a check-box option: Reopen Windows When Logging Back In. If you select this check box, your Mac will start back up with the same windows (and applications) that were open when you shut down (or restarted). This can be a real time-saver, but you can clear the check box and disable this option if that's not what you want.

Most Mac users have been forced to shut down improperly more than once without anything horrible happening, of course — but don't be lulled into a false sense of security. Break the rules one time too many (or under the wrong circumstances), and your most important files could be toast. The *only* time you should turn off your Mac without shutting down properly is when your screen is completely frozen or when your system crashed due to a kernel panic and you've already tried everything else. (See Chapter 23 for a list of those “everything elses.”) A stubborn crash doesn't happen often — and less often under macOS than ever before — but when it does, forcing your Mac to turn off and then back on might be the only solution.

## A few things you should definitely not do with your Mac

This section covers the bad stuff that can happen to your computer if you do the wrong things with it. If something bad has already happened to you, see Chapter 23.

» **Don't unplug your desktop Mac when it's turned on.** Very bad things can happen, such as having your OS break. See the preceding section to learn about shutting down your system properly.

Note that this warning doesn't apply to MacBooks as long as their battery is at least partially charged. As long as there's enough juice in the battery to power



your MacBook, you can connect and disconnect its power adapter to your heart's content.

- » **Don't use your Mac when lightning is near.** Here's a simple life equation for you: Mac + lightning = dead Mac. 'Nuff said. Oh, and don't place much faith in inexpensive surge protectors. A good jolt of lightning will fry the surge protector and everything plugged into it, including computers, modems, printers, and hubs. Some surge protectors can withstand some lightning strikes, but those warriors aren't the cheapies that you buy at your local computer emporium. Unplugging your Mac from the wall during electrical storms is safer and less expensive. (Don't forget to unplug your external routers, network hubs, printers, and other hardware that plugs into the wall as well; lightning can fry them too.)

For MacBooks, disconnect the power adapter and other cables connected to grid-powered electrical equipment, because whatever those cables are connected to could fry — and fry your MacBook right along with it. After you do that, you can use your MacBook during a storm if you care to. You can have your iPhone or your AirPods connected to your MacBook for charging, as long as it's off the grid.

- » **Don't jostle, bump, shake, kick, throw, dribble, or punt your Mac, especially while it's running.** Older Macs contain a hard drive that spins at 5,200 revolutions per minute (rpm) or more. A jolt to a hard drive while it's reading or writing a file can cause the head to crash into the disk, which can render many — or all — files on it unrecoverable. Ouch!

Don't think you're exempt if your Mac uses a solid-state drive with no moving parts. A good bump to your Mac could damage other components. Treat your Mac like it's a carton of eggs, and you'll never be sorry.

- » **Don't forget to back up your data!** If the files on your hard drive mean anything to you, you must back up. Not maybe. *Must*. Even if your most important file is your last saved game of Bejeweled, you still need to back up your files. Fortunately, macOS includes an awesome backup utility called Time Machine. (Unfortunately, you need an external hard drive to take advantage of it.) Please read Chapter 21 now, and find out how to back up before something horrible happens to your valuable data!

Definitely do not use household window cleaners or paper towels on your screen. Either one can harm it. Instead, use a soft clean cloth (preferably microfiber), and if you're going to use a liquid or spray, make sure it's specifically designed not to harm computer displays. Finally, only spray the cleaner onto a *cloth*; never spray anything directly onto the screen.



TIP



WARNING

# Point-and-click 101

Are you new to the Mac? Just figuring out how to move the mouse around? Now is a good time to go over some fundamental stuff that you need to know for just about everything you'll be doing on the Mac. Spend a few minutes reading this section, and soon you'll be clicking, double-clicking, pressing, and pointing all over the place. If you think you have the whole mousing thing pretty much figured out, feel free to skip this section.

Still with me? Good. Now for some basic terminology:

» **Point:** Before you can click or press anything, you have to *point* to it. Place your hand on your mouse, and move it so that the pointer arrow is over the object you want — such as on top of an icon or a button.

If you're using a trackpad, slide your finger lightly across the pad until the pointer arrow is over the object you want.

» **Click:** Also called *single click*. Use your index finger to push the mouse button (or the left mouse button if your mouse has more than one) all the way down and then let go so that the button (usually) produces a satisfying clicking sound. (If you have one of the optical Apple mice, you push the whole thing down to click.) Use a single click to highlight an icon, press a button, or activate a check box or window.

In other words, first you point and then you click — *point and click*, in computer lingo.

If you're using a trackpad, press down on it to click. You can also configure the trackpad so that you can tap to click; see Chapter 6.

» **Double click:** *Click twice* in rapid succession. With a little practice, you can perfect this technique in no time. Use a double click to open a folder or to launch a file or application.

Trackpad users: Press down on the pad two times in rapid succession. If you've enabled Tap to Click, you can double-tap to double-click.

» **Secondary click:** Hold down the Control key while clicking (also called *Control-clicking* or *right-clicking*).

Trackpad users can either hold down the Control key while pressing down on the trackpad with one finger or tap the trackpad with two fingers without holding down the Control key.

If tapping your trackpad with two fingers didn't bring up a little menu, check your Trackpad pane in System Settings (see Chapter 6).

Control-clicking displays a *contextual* menu (also known as a *shortcut menu*). In fact, if you're blessed with a two-or-more-button mouse, you can right-click

and avoid having to hold down the Control key. If it doesn't work, you can enable this feature in the Mouse pane in System Settings.

- » **Drag:** *Dragging* something usually means you have to click it first and hold down the mouse or trackpad button. Then you move the mouse on your desk or mouse pad (or your finger on the trackpad) so that the pointer and whatever you select moves across the screen. The combination of holding down the button and dragging the mouse is usually referred to as *clicking and dragging*.
- » **Wiggle (or jiggle):** This welcome improvement is awesome when you lose track of the pointer on your screen. Just wiggle your mouse back and forth (or jiggle your finger back and forth on the trackpad) for a few seconds, and the pointer will magically get much bigger, making it easier to see on the screen. When you stop wiggling or jiggling, the pointer returns to its normal size.
- » **Choose an item from a menu:** To get to macOS menu commands, you must first open a menu and then choose the option you want. Click the menu name to open the menu, and then click the command you want. When the menu is open, you can also type the first letter or letters of the item to select it, and then press the spacebar or Return to execute the command.



TIP

You can also use the menus a different way. Point at the name of the menu you want with your pointer and then press the mouse button to open the menu. Keep holding down the mouse button and drag downward until you select the command you want. When the command is highlighted, let go of the mouse button to execute the command.

Go ahead and give it a try!



REMEMBER

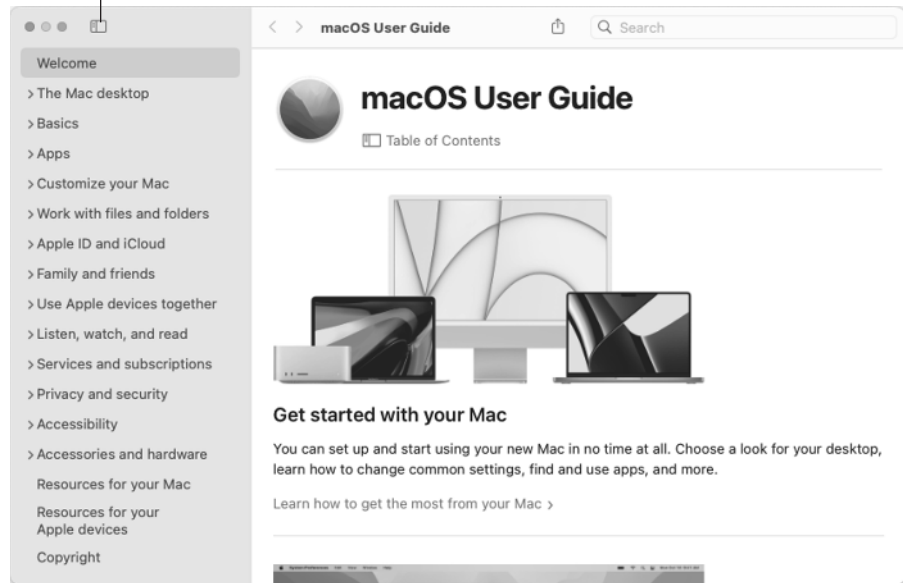
The terms given in the preceding list apply to all Macs — both MacBooks and Mac desktop systems. If you use a trackpad with your Mac, you'll want to add a few more terms — such as *tap*, *swipe*, *rotate*, *pinch*, and *spread* — to your lexicon. You can read all about them in Chapters 2 and 11.

## Getting Help

One of the best features of macOS is the excellent built-in help. When you have a question about how to do something, Help is the first place you should visit (after this book, of course).

Clicking the Help menu reveals the Search field at the top of the menu and the macOS Help item. Choosing macOS Help opens the window shown in Figure 1-5.

Table of Contents icon



**FIGURE 1-5:** Mac Help is nothing if not helpful.



**TIP**

Press **Shift+⌘+?** to open Help for the current app.

You can browse Help by clicking a topic in the table of contents and then clicking a subtopic. If you don't see the table of contents, click the Table of Contents icon, labeled in Figure 1-5.

To search Mac Help, simply type a word or phrase in either Search field — the one in the Help menu itself or the one near the top of the Help window on the right side — and then press Return. In a few seconds, your Mac provides one or more articles to read, which (theoretically) are related to your question. As long as your Mac is connected to the Internet, search results include articles from the Apple online support database.



**REMEMBER**

Although you don't have to be connected to the Internet to use Mac Help, you do need an Internet connection to get the most out of it. (Chapter 13 can help you set up an Internet connection, if you don't have one.) That's because macOS installs only certain help articles on your hard drive. If you ask a question that those articles don't answer, Mac Help connects to the Apple website and downloads the answer (assuming that you have an active Internet connection). These answers appear when you click Show All near the bottom of some article lists. Click one of these entries, and Help Viewer retrieves the text over the Internet. This is sometimes inconvenient but also quite smart, because Apple can update the Help system at any time without requiring any action from you.

Furthermore, after you ask a question and Mac Help has grabbed the answer from the Apple website, the answer remains on your hard drive forever. If you ask for it again — even at a later date — your computer won't have to download it from the Apple website again.

If you see a See More Results on the Web link, you can click it to launch Safari and perform a web search for the phrase you typed.



TIP

Mac Help also has a cool feature that literally points you to the commands you need. Try this:

1. In the Help menu's Search field, type a word or phrase.
2. Select any item that has a menu icon to its left (such as the items with *side* in their names in Figure 1-6).

An arrow appears, pointing to that command in the appropriate menu.

Finally, don't forget that most apps have their own Help systems, so if you want general help with your Mac, you need to first click the Finder icon in the Dock, click the desktop, or use the app-switching shortcut,  $\text{⌘}+\text{Tab}$ , to activate Finder. Only then can you choose Mac Help from Finder's Help menu.

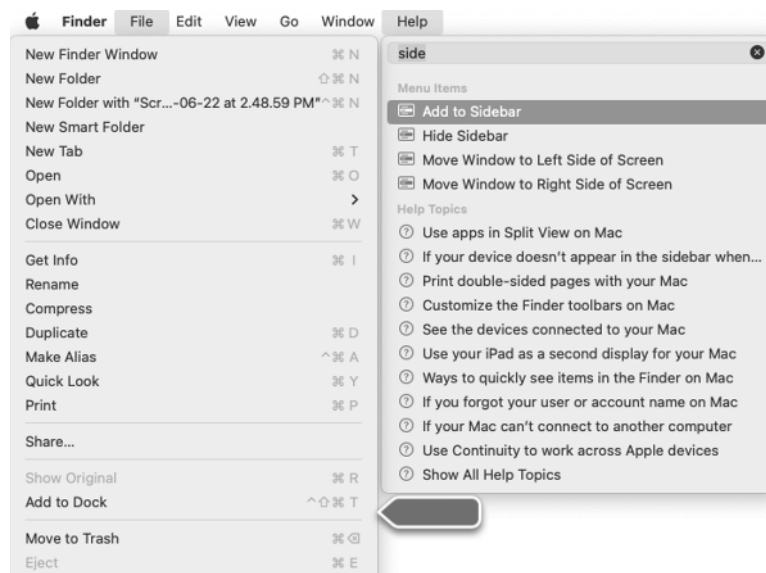


FIGURE 1-6:

If you choose an item in the Menu Items section, an arrow points to that item in context.

